

Battersea Foundation continues mission to restore historic home

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The foundation plans to paint the roof gray.

F.M. Wiggins/Staff Photos John Greenwalt Lee, conservator, and Joseph Shaw of Citywide Decorators, work at Battersea Sept. 15.

PETERSBURG - Battersea, Inc. has changed its name to Battersea Foundation, but the mission remains the same - preservation of one of the most historic homes in the city.

Right now, that work is concentrating on stabilizing the house to prevent any further deterioration. That work has included over the summer making sure moisture can't get between the exterior stucco finish and the bricks of the home, putting caps on the chimneys and a protection system over the window frames.

"The woodwork on the windows is in superb shape, and we want them to stay that way," said John Greenwalt Lee, a conservator working with the Battersea Foundation to help preserve and restore the house.

He said that part of the reason for the great condition of the windows is the higher quality materials used at the time.

Lee's protection systems are based primarily on painted foam-core material which is then installed over the existing window frame.

"We want the color to be just right," Lee said. "We want it to blend in. We want it to be very subtle. That's the idea."

Lee said that the protections help to keep moisture away from the wooden parts of the windows, and are designed and painted to mimic the shadows and colors

of the actual window frame. Lee's goal is to protect the windows, while making it hard for the casual observer to see the actual foam-core material.

Along with the window protections, the conservation team is painting the roof of the house. Tempy Barbru, executive director of the Battersea Foundation, said that the roof will be repainted to an original gray color.

"The next step is to bring the house back to its original 1830s look," Barbru said. She added that though the house was constructed in 1768 it was felt by the foundation that the 1830s were the most important era for the house.

Along with the main house, the foundation plans to restore an orangery - or greenhouse-like structure - located just in front of the house. "We believe that it is possibly one of the oldest freestanding structures of its type in the state," Barbru said.

The foundation was also recently notified that it is the recipient of a matching grant from "Save America's Treasures," in the amount of \$150,000. One of only two Virginia awards this grant cycle by the Department of the Interior, the grant will help to address some critical needs such as the stabilization of two chimneys, restoration of the stucco facade and the orangery.

Once the exterior of both structures is stabilized, Barbru said, the third phase of restoration - the interior of the main house - can begin.

One of the ways the foundation plans to continue to pursue its goals is through fund-raising activities that also showcase the property. One of those recent activities was part of the foundation's new leisure and learning series. The most recent events was an Antiques Jamboree and Appraisal Fair, which allowed visitors to have three items appraised all for the cost of a \$5 admission. The event also featured Emyl Jenkins, author of the Sterling Glass Mystery Series.

Barbru said that the series is focused on providing educational and passive recreation services on relevant subjects to residents of the area. The goal is to have at least one program a month, weather permitting.

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